

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM CHILDREN'S BUDGET 2022



First Focus on Children is proud to release the **Children's Budget 2022**, which provides a comprehensive analysis of the share of spending allocated to kids across more than 250 government programs in the federal budget. The book tracks domestic and international spending on children including both mandatory and discretionary funding across more than a dozen federal departments and numerous agencies and bureaus. This is the third year the book tracks international resources supporting kids, and the second year the book captures pandemic aid and adds three refundable tax credits: The Child Tax Credit (CTC), the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, and the Earned Income Tax Credit.

This year, we began tracking outlays for environmental health for the first time, analyzing federal spending that protects children against the impacts of climate change, air pollution, toxins and pesticides. We also have reorganized our coverage of Child Welfare and Safety to create a Justice and Child Protection chapter that encompasses three systems: Youth justice, child welfare, and the Unaccompanied Children's Program. This reorganization and renaming better reflects the goals of those programs.

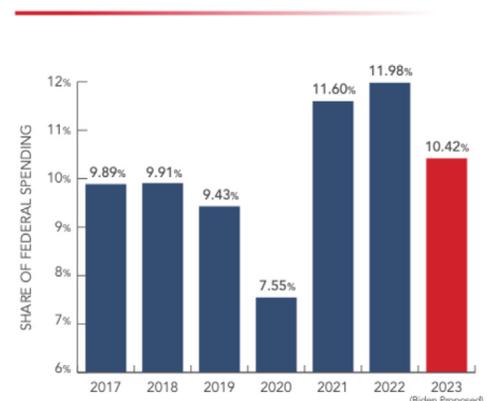
Historically, children come last and least in the federal budget and appalling statistics reflect that reality:

- [In 2020, more than 1.2 million U.S. students were experiencing homelessness.](#)
- [At the end of September 2022, nearly 5 million children lived in a household that couldn't afford to give them enough food.](#)
- [Since the improved CTC expired in January 2022, we have seen child poverty spike – plunging nearly 4 million children back into poverty that month, including over 1.3 million Hispanic children and over 660,000 Black children.](#)
- [11.8% of children ages 3-17 experienced anxiety or depression in 2020, a 25.5% increase from 2016.](#)

Fortunately, our Children's Budget 2022 analysis found that the share of spending domestically and internationally on children has increased in recent years.

This year's analysis reveals an unprecedented share of federal spending on children at 11.98% in FY 2022, the highest recorded by First Focus on Children. During the five years from FY 2017 to FY 2022, the share of spending on children increased more than 21%. This increase represents a continuation of recent COVID-fueled spending and funding improvements over FY 2017, when the share of federal spending on children began to stagnate and then decline through FY 2020.

Children's Combined Share (Domestic and International) of Total Spending



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Children's Budget 2022 uncovered additional bright spots in our nation's investment in children. Since 2017:

- Funding for children's **mental health** has increased by 11.3%.
- The share of federal spending going to children's **environmental health** increased by 25%.
- The share of federal spending dedicated to **education programs** increased by 105%.
- The share of federal spending on **justice and child protection** increased by 28%.
- The share of federal spending on **children's nutrition programs** increased by 36%.
- The share of federal spending on **children's income support programs** increased by 21%.

Key declines, however, temper the good news

Children continue to reap the benefits of increased funding in response to the pandemic, but lawmakers have begun paring back these investments and are on track to reverse the progress made, particularly the gains achieved under the American Rescue Plan Act. For instance, from FY 2021 to FY 2022, funding for children in inflation-adjusted dollars dropped more than 17%.

In fact, nearly half of the areas we track saw decreases from FY 2017:

- The share of federal spending going to **early childhood** decreased by 10%.
- The share of federal spending going to **children's health** decreased by 11%.
- The share of federal spending going to **children's housing** decreased by 14%.
- The share of federal spending going to **youth training** decreased by 28%.

The United States historically has spent just a sliver of its international budget on children and that trend continues in this year's Children's Budget.

Global crises, including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, are upending the lives of children and youth around the world, making it harder than ever for them to thrive and reach their full potential. In under-resourced parts of the world, this confluence of challenges is undermining decades of progress to improve children's health and well-being. Children and young people internationally receive a minimal share of foreign assistance funding. Only about \$.085 of every \$1 of foreign assistance investments benefitted children.

Children need lawmakers to be ambitious and prioritize them in federal budget decisions, or we will revert back to a declining share of federal spending on kids.

If Congress fails to act on critical policy issues and budgetary decisions of importance to children, we will see rising rates of child poverty, increasing numbers of uninsured children, more children left hungry and homeless, and an increase in the number of kids living in high-stress and under-resourced households, which can lead to higher levels of child abuse—both at home and abroad.

Children's Share of International Spending

